



NEWSLETTER

Senior Recognition Sunday

Facebook or YouTube Livestream at 10:00am, Sunday

Our service includes recognition of our talented graduating senior.



Photo by Zachary Olson on Unsplash

"Change is situational. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological. It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation or self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life.

Without a transition, a change is just a rearrangement of the furniture."

—William Bridges

Children's Religious Exploration



Kevin Lausch, Director of CRE

Family Event and Parents Chat - Saturday, May 22 at 2:00-3:30PM

Join us at the Fellowship Green for kids activities while parents talk about what type of programming you would like for the coming year (fall-winter-spring), plus to give us your thoughts on reopening. The kids' activities will be nature based, plus we'll have snacks of course! Please RSVP to kevin@uutc.org to attend.

Youth Book Club - Saturday, May 29 at 2PM-3:30PM

The last book club meeting for tweens and teens for the spring will cover "The Midwinter Witch", the last book in the Witch Boy trilogy. The Book Club will take a break for the summer and will restart in September. Hope to see you there!

Chalice Camp - Monday to Friday, Aug 9 to Aug 13 from 9am to noon

Chalice Camp will "Return to Hogwarts" again with this fun, magical camp for kids aged 5 to 10. Camp activities will include a trip to Diagon Alley, making yummy treats, care of magical creatures, and of course potion making! Youth aged 11+ can be a House Prefect (camp helper) and youth aged 13+ can lead a "house" of kids. More information and registration will be available soon.

B.Y.O.B. at the Fire R-I-N-G

This is a no-curriculum event. Our next fire circle will be **Sunday, June 6th, between 5:30 and 7:30**. So far, we have one Master of Fire to maintain order of the orange flamey-thingee. We are eager for more Masters of Fire to surrender themselves to service for backup. If attendance exceeds the site's capacity, we will schedule other occasions. You are free to move about the site. Seating around the fire is limited to un-



burnt logs unless you B.Y.O.Chair as well as your beverage.

There may be marshmallows, if demand reaches the ears of someone in charge. [Please inform the admin](#) if children will be present, in which case THERE WILL BE MARSHMALLOWS.

All activity is at your own risk. The ground is not level and there are bumpy things called "nature."

Can You Say “Eagle Scout?”

Congratulations to Frank Parsons and Ian Fox for achieving the Rank of Eagle Scout! Eagle Scout is the highest achievement available in the Boy Scouts of America. Since its inception in 1911, only 4% of Scouts have earned this rank after a lengthy review process. (Wikipedia) And both our boys from the last two years have earned it!

Congrats, Ian & Frank!



Why Rev. Bob is Paying Attention to the Yankees

Rev. Bob Renjilian

Some of you may follow sports, and some of you may follow COVID stories. In my case I am a person who went to see the Yankees as a kid (not often, as it was only a special trip), but I don't follow televised sports. I do troll the internet for COVID-19 stories though, and the Yankees are front page news on that front!

The team follows relaxed rules because they meet the league's criteria of over 80% vaccinated. Turns out a Yankees coach caught COVID-19 and was diagnosed earlier this month. The coach was fully vaccinated, and we've been told he'd also had COVID-19 in the past year. So they are guessing it is one of the aggressive variants that got him. The coach recovered from the mild or moderate symptoms after a few days.

Once that case was found, they tested the rest of the staff and team. They found eight more cases of COVID-19, all of those were asymptomatic.

So this is exciting news. It means the vaccine (in this case Johnson & Johnson) was working better than initial expectations, as most of the players and staff didn't get COVID. And, among those who tested positive, these were not severe cases, so those few who got "breakthrough" cases ended up with mostly no suffering at all (way better than the trial data when it was released for use). As I said, they suspect it is one of the more aggressive variants, but didn't release details - that is also good news for efficacy against variants.

The team's situation is also mixed with some confusion, as none of these cases will end up in the CDC's statistics, as the CDC (if I read correctly) is only recording breakthrough cases which reach hospitalization or death. If they were not a sports team, they wouldn't have been testing everyone, and would not have known about eight cases (and the reality that most of the team never caught it).

What can we learn from this as a congregation? I believe we still need masks indoors. I believe we can be pleased that the vaccines are making a big difference even in the face of variants. I believe we need to take care of the folks among us who might not be able to get vaccinated, and we should have as much herd immunity as possible and keep up good practices (repeating again: wearing masks, which we now know the team would take off in certain circumstances together). We should not be eating indoors (that requires masks off). We should speak up immediately if we get symptoms or a positive test after being around others in church.

I'd be interested to know what level of vaccination rate we have in our UUTC family. If you are willing to let me know, confidentially, your vaccination status, I'll get a good guess about how that translates to all of UUTC, in advance of our "next normal" (our plans for opening our doors for worship, proposed for June 20). **Please let me know your status: send me an email**, RevBob@uutc.org, or leave a voicemail (toll free) on the pastoral care line which forwards to me: 888-958-1875 . I won't reveal what people tell me, but I will report back a general idea of the percent of UUTC fully or partially vaccinated. This could be helpful to those wary about showing up for large indoor events, such as worship.

Somewhere in the Middle

Josh Carter

"I enjoy the chance to talk with congregants and get to know how they've been handling this past year. When Josh and I talked, he let me know he'd been having conversations with friends and neighbors, truly listening rather than avoiding or debating. I was impressed by his actions, and asked him to write a piece for the newsletter."- Rev. Bob

Like many of us here in North Carolina, I grew up with friends and family on "both sides." Liberal and conservative, Democrat and Republican, religious and secular...back when I thought there were sides to choose between.

One of the many gifts I have received from the pandemic has been the epiphany that there are only "sides" to choose between if we choose to see it that way. What if we took a step back, zoomed out for a minute and viewed the "sides" from a different lens? We could view the "sides" as concepts that have been formed over time through the collective cultural human consciousness. Such a thing as complex as collective consciousness should be a far cry from stagnant opposition. I would imagine it is ever changing, adapting, evolving, day by day, minute by minute. In this light, two sides become two halves of a whole, yin and yang, complementary points of view.



Take a deep breath. It may seem like we're all arguing a lot this year, but in many ways the conversation is doing what it is supposed to. Imagine we are all on a big road trip together. Progressive values get us moving in the right direction, creating momentum, much like the gas pedal. As we navigate the road ahead we find there is also value in having a brake pedal, to slow us down when we need to. This is where Conservative values are important. When I drive a car I want both the gas and the brakes to work! It would also be nice to have a good steering wheel that goes both right and left. If it only turned in one direction we would be going around in circles. Stop and go, right and left. We need different perspectives to create balance in our world!

So if everything is so complementary, why do we constantly seem to find ourselves at odds with the “other side”? I don’t entirely have the answer to that question, but I do want to share with you two major pitfalls and their complementary opportunities that I have discovered in my search for truth (which often seems to lie somewhere in the middle; a little of this, a little of that).

The first pitfall I would like to explore is that of rebuttal rhetoric. From our early school days we have been trained in the “art of debate.” We listen to an opposing view with the intention of finding a rebuttal to every statement. We listen for a weakness in their argument, a fault into which we can drive a chisel and expose the ways they are wrong. This approach almost never convinces the opposition. In fact, it is way more likely to be counterproductive, each chisel blow widening the divide that we desire to close. More than that, by assuming we are right and they are wrong, we effectively cut our own spiritual and intellectual growth short. How many learning opportunities we have missed along the way!

The challenge at hand here begins by simply noticing when we fall into rebuttal rhetoric. We all do it. No need to beat yourself up about it. Just notice and acknowledge its presence. When we acknowledge the way things are without judging them as good or bad, we see the road map more clearly. We will find the right way to go, together.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. If we choose rebuttal rhetoric, so will the opposition. If we listen with intent to learn and gain a better understanding of a different perspective, so will the opposition. Often we will find we have more in common than we realize.

Imagine several people view an enormous mountain from different sides. From one person’s perspective, the mountain may appear grassy, rolling and gentle. From another vantage point, the same mountain may appear rocky, rough, unscalable. Another person from a different vantage point may see the mountain as a series of forested plateaus. They are looking at the same mountain, yet it appears completely different to each person. They can choose to argue about what the mountain looks like, or if it is worth climbing. Or they can choose to listen to each other in order to gain a deeper understanding of the big picture. This mountain is similar to the way we view reality. Each person has an incredibly unique perspective of that reality. We can choose to argue over what reality and truth look like. Or we can choose to listen to each other to gain a deeper understanding of the big picture.

The second pitfall that I have discovered that can distract us from our journey is waving our banners too much. Whether it’s a bumper sticker, tee shirt, flag, picket sign, meme or otherwise, it is all too easy to put a label on yourself these days. We tend to feel an urge to associate with our values that we hold dear. To some degree this is natural, perhaps even necessary. But what are the potential outcomes? There is danger in oversimplifying, which inevitably happens with this sort of short, one sided conversation. You are demanding 2 seconds of someone else’s time for their mind to create an assumption of who you are based on a few words. You are way more complex and valuable than that!

Yes, it is important to be involved. Yes, it is important to hold values for yourself and your family. But is it important to make yourself a target for resentment? Banners can be healthy and fun when used for things like sports, but when it comes to the things that end up being “hot topics” they can be counterproductive and offensive. This year we have become all too familiar with that gut wrenching feeling we get when a meme that we don’t relate to pops up again and again.

We can maintain sovereignty by not getting caught up in arguments and debate arenas that won't go anywhere. Let us focus instead on the values we have in common and allow our shared human experience to drive the conversation. Sure, it doesn't make sense to tiptoe around everyone so as not to offend, and I'm not saying we should shy away from big issues. What I am saying is that true resolution can only come about through true conversation. The type in which we set down our guard and see the other person for who they really are, which is a sacred, important thread in the tightly woven fabric of our own reality. That is something worthy of respect.

We are intertwined with everything we experience in strange and mysterious ways that we will never understand. The mystic force we call God is the essence of all existence! It is a concept so grand, so all-encompassing that it is difficult to comprehend, which is why so many different and beautiful traditions and faiths have evolved over the millennia. The spirit of God flows through each of us, whether we call ourselves religious or not. The divine spark within me is the same divine spark that is within you. Next conversation you have with someone, acknowledge that you are, in essence, having a conversation with God. It will rock your world.

Roughly 2000 years ago lived two of the greatest teachers ever to walk the face of the earth, both divine in their own right. Jesus Christ and the Buddha. They presented the world with a message that still holds true today: The only way to eliminate your enemies is to love them. This creates a bit of a paradox. It is essentially impossible to love your enemy, because as soon as you love them, they have transformed into a friend.

The truth always lies somewhere in the middle.

Treasurer's Report and Comments

Gail Meyers, Treasurer

As we draw near to the end of the fiscal year, our financial reports now cover all but May and June activity. At this point I can make estimates as to where UUTC will stand at the close of the year. The Projection Estimate at this point predicts that we will end with a surplus, as well as current year cash in the bank without dipping into next year's pledges, and an expected contribution to the Reserve Fund.



The Pledge Campaign team, once again, did a wonderful job with the final pledge amount reaching \$293,695.92. The goal was \$300,000.00 so with all of next fiscal year's potential new members, it is believed that we will exceed the goal. Well done everyone!

The budget of \$406,750.00 was passed by the Congregation on May 16. Many thanks to Dave Roberts for presenting the financial needs so clearly and concisely for the Budget Forums on May 6 and 8. As usual, there is an expected gap between the pledge goal and the expenses expected. This year's gap is a little bigger than in years past, there is an increased focus on programming in the budget. However, the Board did a terrific job of coming up with ideas to fill in the blanks.

The 501(c)(3) application has finally been filed. This was a massive project. I would like to extend a huge thanks to the Board, RK Young, Dave Roberts and many more for carrying this project through to the end.

Treasurer's Report as of April 30, 2021			
<u>Operating Fund</u>			
	<u>This Month</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>	
Receipts	\$ 14,673.28	\$321,810.45	
Expenditures	24,412.63	248,544.27	
Net Surplus (Deficit)	\$ (9,739.35)	\$ 73,266.18	
Unrestricted Cash in Fund:	\$ 48,037.16		
Restricted Reserve Fund:	32,175.44		
Total Available Cash on Hand:	\$ 80,212.60		
Endowment Fund:	\$ 211,779.92		
<u>Other Funds:</u>	<u>Bank Balance</u>	<u>Amount Restricted</u>	
Fund 3: Varsity Fund Checking	\$ 7,692.23	\$ 0.00	
Fund 7: Capital Expenditures	\$ 13,097.24	\$ 5,695.90	
Fund 8: Gifts and Memorials	\$ 1,475.00	\$ 0.00	
Fund 10: Charitable Giving	\$ 2,360.00	\$ 2,360.00	
This Month –Children's Center			\$1,085.00
Fund 12: Dignity Project	\$ 8,726.15	\$ 8,726.15	
Fund 13: Sabbatical Fund:	\$ 6,368.54	\$ 0.00	
<u>Pledge Campaigns @ 5/18/2021</u>	<u>Committed</u>	<u>Collected</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>
2020/2021	\$ 275,558.00	\$ 251,656.14	\$ 23,901.86
2021/2022	\$ 293,695.92	\$ 43,110.00	
Respectfully Submitted,			
Gail Meyers, Treasurer	5/18/2021		

The PPP loan of \$28,000 was granted and forgiven giving us the ability to stay afloat during the time of Covid disruptions.

All in all, it certainly has been a turbulent year, but our UUTC community has risen to all the obstacles and tasks thrown our way. I will have a more complete financial picture after the June month end, but I am very encouraged with UUTC's current position.

Gail C. Meyers, Treasurer — May 20, 2021

The Next Normal - COVID and UUTC



Rev. Bob Renjilian

I'm excited. As promised, this is the month we're looking at the science and following guidance to plan opening the doors to worship in the coming weeks. In all this planning we are putting our care for each other as a principle to follow. For the rest of May's Sundays we're still 10:00 online, but Sunday, June 6 will bring a time change (likely a 9:00 online service, to prepare for two services once we open).

I am aware of the number of congregants who have reason to remain cautious about being exposed. For example, our county lags behind North Carolina and the nation for the numbers of seniors fully vaccinated (the Governor's executive order this week suggests 75% or more are vaccinated age 65+, statewide, but recent stats from Transylvania County show something closer to only 60% for this vulnerable age group, locally). I know we have members who are immune compromised, with cancer for example, and they and their caregivers are just as much wanting church as those of us who are less at risk. Families with children have to be careful, too, as the youngest in our midst are not vaccinated. It will be a cautious and compassionate balancing act, especially in the short run, to keep everyone in our care. This means being a little strict about indoor plans, and continued commitment to online church still being an option.

We had a plan, and then the CDC and the Governor lifted restrictions. So the Task Group met again this week and updated our process.

So, what are we going to do? We're not quite ready for the "next normal" right now in May, but we're working towards that in a few weeks. Our prediction is that by mid-June we will announce our doors opening, conditions permitting. First we need better COVID stats, high volunteer signups, and tech glitches fixed. Here are some details.

We watch the statistics: Just a few weeks ago the number of new cases in Transylvania County were still in the "critical" range. More recent data is much more promising. If Memorial Day gatherings don't push us backwards, it appears we'll be well on the way to the green zone on the charts by mid-June.

We fix stuff: We're figuring out a few technical issues (building ventilation, and tech issues for managing in-person worship along with the online presence simultaneously). We found the ventilation wasn't up to par with our expectations during the recent memorial service with a very small number of people present, that issue seems to be fixed this week but we want to be sure. We also found that the in-room projections screens were not working properly (thankfully we had a good day during the memorial service, but then it stopped).

We wear masks: Since not everyone has had a vaccination, and some of us are immune compromised, we ask that everyone wear a mask when in the building. Please plan to bring your own, we'll only have a small supply for those who forget.

We will wear name tags: There are folks who know us only from online services, and I, as your minister, still don't know everybody! We don't say "we're back together" since we've got folks we've not yet met. Let's act as if we're all newcomers in the "Next Normal" of church.

We don't eat indoors: So that there is no excuse to take masks off, we won't be serving beverages or food indoors.

We won't sing indoors: Singing isn't deemed safe enough until we're able to meet the UUA's newest posted guidance. But we will enjoy music!

We get volunteers: Did you see the request for ushers and other Sunday helpers? How many people will need rides to UUTC when that becomes possible - and who is available to drive? How about musicians? We will also need to hire nursery staff, etc. It would be awful to be all ready to open, and then not be able to do it just because people don't sign up as ushers, greeters, etc.

We serve the youngest in our congregation in creative ways: This is the group which has had the least amount of time to even consider the opportunity to be vaccinated, and some still can't be immunized. Kevin Lausch is working on ideas separately from our worship plans.

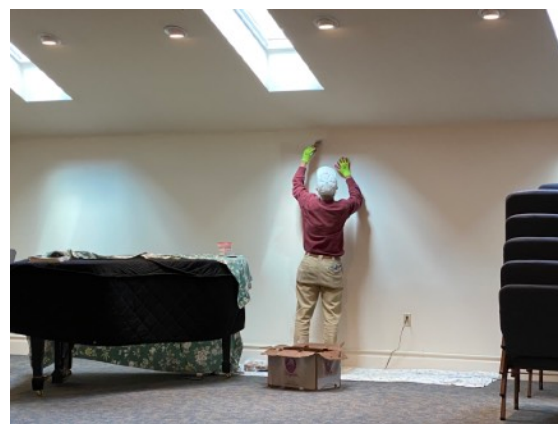
We'll socialize outdoors: Following the science, along with our caring commitment to each other's safety, we won't linger indoors. Pretend it is a fire drill every Sunday once we open - where people swiftly and safely head to the nearest exit as soon as worship is over.

Plan on two services: We expect it is safest to have two services once we do open the doors. That reduces the concentration of people in the space at any given time, and may help our ventilation systems. Only one of these will be simultaneously streamed online.

So, in summary: We're excitedly working on a mid-June opening of the building for hybrid worship (in-person & online), so long as Memorial Day activities don't cause a new spike. We'll get the tech to work between now and then. We're going to get volunteers and staff for Sundays (sign up!). Kevin is working on alternative options for children, which may phase in at a different pace. We're insisting on masks indoors, as a protection of the most vulnerable among us. We're going to move socializing outdoors the moment services are over. Most of all, we'll remember not all are vaccinated, and not all can be due to medical issues, so we'll be care-full with one another.

Getting Ready

Paint ages. And it also gets grubby from hands and shoes and other things running into it. And it also ends up with holes because we make changes and move things around, so then the holes have to be patched. And painted. And sometimes, the patches are too obvious and you just need to paint the whole wall. Thank you, Ian Cowie, for painting one of those walls this week!



Ballot Results

At the time of the vote, we had 172 members on the roll, meaning that a quorum was 52 members. Of those 172 members, 82 cast ballots — 65 by computer, and 17 by paper ballot.

Approval of the 9/17/2020 Annual Meeting Minutes — 96% yes

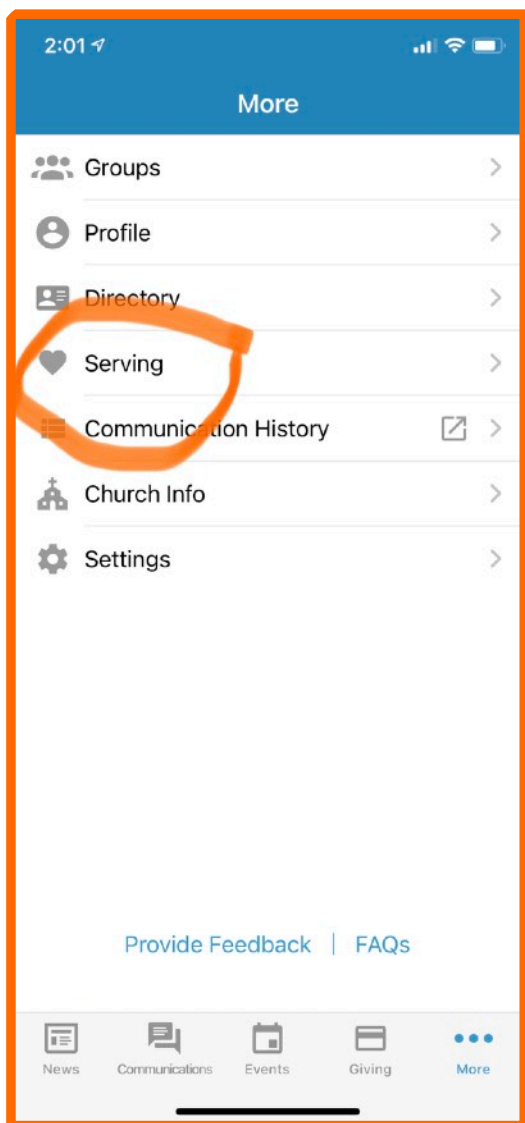
Approval of the Board of Trustees Slate of Candidates — 100% yes

Approval of the Nominations Committee Slate of Candidates — 100% yes

Approval of the Endowment Committee Slate of Candidates — 99% yes

Approval of the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year Operating Budget — 96% yes

Realm & Volunteer Scheduling



You can find the way to sign up as a volunteer through the website, onrealm.org, or you can use the Realm Connect app on your smartphone. The image provided here is from the smartphone app as it appears on an iPhone, but the language is the same in the website access, as well.

The 3 dots in the bottom right corner are how I reached this menu, though on Android, I think it appears from the menu in the upper left corner. What you seek is the **SERVING** menu. Click the little arrow on the right side to go to the next piece.

Volunteer positions like usher, greeter, coffee host and others will appear in the menu. Click on these to indicate your interest. The Serving Team (ministry team, but Realm calls them Serving Teams) associated with those “roles” will approve your involvement.

In the process, you can indicate dates that you are not available. Making a note of those dates will save you from getting assigned for dates you are not available because Realm will not present you as an “option” for the schedule on those days. But even if you don’t indicate dates, you can always let Eloise or myself know that you aren’t available and we will take you off the schedule.

Please try this out! We are making changes now as we prepare for the Next Normal! — RK